Windermere Basin Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Reduction Project Public Meeting

Thursday, May 20, 2010, 6:00 – 7:30 PM

Summary of Public Comments and Questions

Approximately fourteen community members attended the meeting and offered the following comments and questions on the project.

Questions/Comments from Community	Response from Project Team
Site Selection	
Last fall we were assured that the Center for Spiritual Living was the best site for the Windermere project. Why are we now deciding that this is not the best site?	The context for the project has been evolving. The discussion with the Center for Spiritual Living was fairly positive and cooperative, but in the end they decided the project would be too disruptive for their congregation. We decided to see if we could make another alternative work. At the same time, we learned that there was another site at Magnuson Park that did not have the deed restrictions that the first site we looked at had.
Why was the Center for Spiritual Living considered to be the best at the time?	Of the top three alternatives as of last year, all were fairly high in value and fairly low in cost. Sand Point Elementary has since been removed from consideration because it is reopening as a school. There were deed restrictions on the Parks properties at Magnuson Park that would be very costly and prevent us from obtaining property rights in time to meet our schedule obligations with Ecology, if at all. Because of that, at the time, our best site was the Center for Spiritual Living. Since then we have been informed of two new developments: we have discovered information about an alternative location at Magnuson Park that makes it more attractive, and the Center for Spiritual Living reconsidered allowing the use of its site. We have identified a site at Magnuson Park that is Department of Housing property, making permitting the project within the project schedule much more feasible.
Housing seems like a good use for the Magnuson Park/Department of Housing property.	The City has worked hard to make sure housing would still be able to go forward at the site once construction of the underground storage tank is complete.

Questions/Comments from Community	Response from Project Team
How final is the decision to use the Magnuson Park site? What is the percent final? 60%, 75%, 95%? Will we be back in six months and hear something else?	We're probably about 95% certain that this is the site, but are still open to hearing your comments and concerns. The project is in the very early stages of the design phase, so there is still a lot to time for feedback about the project.
How Storage Controls Overflows	
The number of times the proposed storage tank is much less than the number of overflows that are currently happening.	We will also be retrofitting some of the existing storage in the system so it is used more efficiently. With the way the system operates now, there are an average of 12 overflows per year. One of the retrofit projects will be for the existing storage in Windermere Park. We'll put in a gate at the lower portion of the system, and monitor flows in the downstream lines. We won't start storing in these tanks until the downstream piping is full. The existing system doesn't have the ability to "look" at capacity downstream. These kinds of retrofits will reduce the rate of overflows. We still need the additional proposed storage to take up the remaining two to three overflows per year.
With the retrofit projects, you're really close to meeting the one overflow per year average requirement. Is the proposed storage tank really necessary?	Yes, the volume of the remaining overflow events is large. Storage is needed to control those events. We ran thirty-one years of storm data through our modeling system, for the Windermere CSO system. Once the retrofits are incorporated, a tank of two million gallons would still be needed. Two million gallons ensures that the system would satisfy the one-per-year requirement.
It's kind of a back-up storage?	Yes, kind of. First we fill the Windermere Park tanks, then the Sand Point Way tank, and only then would we start filling the new tank. We wanted to make sure to use the storage we have now, that way we wouldn't have to use the new storage as often, which minimizes maintenance.
What is the capacity of storage now in the Windermere basin?	Currently it is 0.5 – 0.75 million gallons.
When you say the proposed storage tank would be in use two or three times a year, would that be to its full capacity? Does that mean you would let it fill and not worry about it until it is filled to the brim?	The full capacity of the tank is required to meet the long-term average of no more than one overflow per year, but it will not fill completely every time. It fills over several hours, can be pumped out within a day, so sewage (and stormwater) will not sit there for very long.
Stormwater	

Questions/Comments from Community	Response from Project Team
Last fall I was here with the same question. Why can't this be done with a neighborhood-wide cistern project, and throw everything at it? This seems like a waste of money and doesn't address non-point pollution, which is as big a problem. Isn't the point to protect water quality?	Non-point source pollution is a problem. The old-fashioned combined sewers are actually the best way to treat non-point pollution because they get all of the water to a treatment plant. Most stormwater systems release untreated stormwater. The City is responsible for meeting combined sewer overflow regulations and stormwater regulations. There are two separate permits - one for stormwater and one for combined sewer overflows, and two separate regulations. This project focuses on the CSO problem. Since this basin is already partially separated, there is not as much benefit from using cisterns to divert stormwater from the combined sewer system.
Can't you address stormwater and combined sewer overflows at the same time and get the same benefit?	In some basins we can and we do, like in Ballard where we can reduce the volume of storage needed substantially by using green stormwater infrastructure. We are addressing both CSO and non-point stormwater pollution together, in that case. Windermere doesn't work so well with that because it's partially separated. Given the requirements we have to meet for CSOs, and the huge amount of money involved, we don't want to add a non-point stormwater component on to this project at this time. We are also trying to balance utility rates.
It just seems to me that if we eliminate rainwater runoff to a CSO it will reduce the chance of an overflow. Why not take half of the $60 million project cost for green stormwater infrastructure.	Rainwise is the city's program for green stormwater infrastructure on private property. We are implementing Rainwise wherever it is feasible. However, disconnecting roofleaders alone in this basin will not be enough to reduce the CSOs down to one overflow per year.
Why not take a storm sewer in the street and reduce the size of the opening so that when we have a downpour it would only take X amount of rain, and then bypass to a cistern based storm sewer with small onsite holding tank. Would that work?	Theoretically, it could work, but you would still be building tanks unless all the water can be absorbed into the ground.

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So if we can absorb that much in the ground, we don't need storage?	If you can absorb all the water into the ground, then theoretically, you would not need any storage. However, absorbing the water into the ground has physical limitations, and it can also have its own challenges and risks. Based on the physical characteristics of this basin, absorbing the water into the ground is not enough to reduce the CSOs down to one per year."
What is the holding capacity of the tank?	2.05 million gallons, or about three Olympic sized swimming pools stacked on top of each other.
Environmental Considerations	
At what point do you tell us really how much noise there will be and how much soil dust will get tossed in the air and settle on yards and cars?	We are doing several environmental studies right now, including noise and traffic studies, soil borings, and tests to determine the amount of groundwater moving through the soil. We will be doing an environmental review under the State Environmental Policy Act. The review document is expected to be public by mid- to end of July. There will be a public meeting again in January 2011 to discuss the project in more detail, and there also will be a pre-construction public meeting with the contractor. That would be good time for construction questions, like methods for minimizing dust, washing down, etc.
The details of noise, dust, etc. will be a concern because we are the most immediate neighbor. How do we assess how much noise this project is going to produce?	There are certain requirements that we are not allowed to exceed. When we looked at the Center for Spiritual Living, we looked at ambient noise that exists already based on traffic data, etc., and found that existing levels were close to construction levels. We will probably be close to ambient noise levels from trucks on Sand Point Way at the currently proposed site.
Radford Court wraps around the project. It includes graduate housing.	The timing of communication will be important because there is a turnover in residents. We've been talking to Lorig about meeting with tenants, both residents and organizations.
Other	

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Is it easy to tell if your roof drain goes to the sewer or stormwater?	Most roof leaders do not go directly into the sewer. In many homes they go into the backyard and, in some cases, the roof leader plumbs to a foundation drain. You can tell by smoke testing or dye testing in the sewer. You can also walk around the house to see where you think it goes. Smoke testing that identifies sewer connections is occasionally done by the City. *Response from citizen:* If the roof leader goes to a splash block, it is probably not connected to the sewer. If it goes into the ground, it is probably connected to the sewer.
Is this totally different from the sewer problems at Matthews Beach?	Yes, that's a King County pump stationt that operates year-round, and involves more concentrated sewage.
How are we paying for this?	This project is paid for by Seattle sewer and drainage rates. Projects are funded 75% by revenue bonds and 25% directly by revenue from current rates. The bonds are tyupically retired over 30 years by rate revenue. The City Council establishes rates every two years based on expected expenditures for capital improvement projects, operations and maintenance costs, and payments to King County for treatment. SPU submits a 6-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to the Mayor and City Council each year along with the annual budget. The next five years is already built into the rate path with an annual CIP of $80 million. Overall, the CSO program is expected to cost about $200-350 million over the next fifteen years.
Is construction scheduled to begin in early 2012?	Probably mid 2012.